

Introduction to Science Fiction

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

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review

- ▶ paper deadline extended to next Monday 10 p.m.
- ▶ Butler's "Speech Sounds": gestures, symbols, and words
- ▶ *ST:TNG* "Darmok": metaphors, myths, and gestures
- ▶ stuff also happened in the 1990s and 2000s
 - ▶ more cyberpunk (Gibson; Stephenson; *The Matrix*, 1999)
 - ▶ SF gets huge (*Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, 1999)
 - ▶ "New Space Opera": Kim Stanley Robinson, Dan Simmons, Ann Leckie
 - ▶ "New Weird": Charles Stross, China Miéville...Jeff VanderMeer

let's get weird... again



Jeff VanderMeer, "The drowned copy of *Annihilation*," photograph, in VanderMeer,

discussion: words

- ▶ What do words do, in this book? Find passages.

they alarm

Was there any reason to relay this information to the others when it would only alarm them? No, I decided, perhaps selfishly. (26)

they hypnotize

Then she abruptly stood and said three words: “*Consolidation of authority.*” (32)

they...grow

In as calm a voice as I could manage, aware of the importance of that moment, I read from the beginning, aloud: *“Where lies the strangling fruit that came from the hand of the sinner I shall bring forth the seeds of the dead to share with the worms that . . .”*

Then the darkness took it. (23)

the shadows of the abyss are like the petals of a monstrous flower that shall blossom within the skull and expand the midn beyond what any man can bear
(61)

they are read

I leaned in closer, like a fool, like someone who had not had months of survival training or ever studied biology. Someone tricked into thinking that words should be read. (25)

they enchant

What are they made of?... Because it helped me to fight the compulsion to keep reading, to descend into the grater darkness and keep descending until had read all there was to read. Already those initial phrases were infiltrating my mind in unexpected ways, finding fertile ground. (24)

The air was so clean, so fresh, while the world back beyond the border was what it had always been during the modern era: dirty, tired, perfect, winding down, at war with itself. (30)

they deceive

The eleventh expedition in particular had been difficult—and personally difficult for me with regard to a fact about which I have not been entirely honest thus far. (55)

pollution, pollution

The idea for Area X—the mysteriously transformed region at the center of the Southern Reach trilogy—came out of dental surgery. Not that I recommend dental surgery as the best way to find inspiration, but it worked for me. Dental surgery along with anger and grief over the BP Gulf Oil Spill. The latter was a dark, horrible spiral through my mind—all of our minds here on the Florida coast—that came back out of me in unexpected ways. For a while it had seemed like they would never stop the leak, that the oil would keep gushing out into the Gulf for decades.

After the oil spill, the spiral continued because I knew that at the microscopic level the oil was still infiltrating and contaminating the environment.

Ibid.

origin story (again!)

The pool had become a functioning ecosystem.... Would the new owners see the beauty and the importance of leaving it as is, or would they destroy it, create unthinking slaughter in honor of the pool's real function? (44–46)

the depths now revealing themselves in a kind of ongoing horror show of such beauty and biodiversity that I could not fully take it all in. (43)

next

- ▶ keep reading, through 119